

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 L-03 AGRE-00 HEW-06 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 /040 W

-----128772 081055Z /16

P R 080912Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2760

INFO USDOC WASHDC

UNCLAS SEOUL 6965

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BGEN, ECSM, KS

SUBJECT: INQUIRY REGARDING ADDITIVE IN TANG

REF: SEOUL 6787

1. COMMERCIAL SECTION HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF FINE SALES CO., A LOCAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION FIRM, REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN DETERMINING THE TRUTH OF ALLEGATIONS THAT A CERTAIN PRESERVATIVE IN "TANG" BRAND BEVERAGE BASE IS HARMFUL TO HUMAN HEALTH. IN JULY 1978, THE FIRM IMPORTED THROUGH A LOCAL TRADER, \$32,949.00 WORTH OF "TANG" AND SOLD IT IN THE LOCAL MARKET.

2. ON AUGUST 8, THE KOREA TIMES AND THE KOREA HERALD CARRIED SIMILAR REPORTS THAT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (MHSA) HAS PROHIBITED THE SALE OF U.S.-PRODUCED "TANG" AND ORDERED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO SEIZE SHIPMENTS ALREADY ON THE MARKET BECAUSE THE PRODUCT CONTAINS "BUTYLATED HYDROXYANISOLE (BHA), AN ANTISEPTIC WHICH KEEPS FOODSTUFFS FROM DETERIORATING OR BEING OXIDIZED." (THIS HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY THE DISTRIBUTOR) (QUOTE FROM KOREA TIMES). THE SAME ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION OF THE U.S. HAS LONG PROHIBITED THE USE OF BHA BECAUSE OF ITS HARMFUL EFFECTS.

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3. FYI: DONG SUH FOOD INDUSTRIES LTD., A TECHNICAL LICENSEE OF AND JOINT VENTURE PARTNER WITH GENERAL FOODS CORPORATION, WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK, IS THE MAKER OF A BEVERAGE BASE PRODUCT ALSO CALLED "TANG" THAT REPORTEDLY CONTAINS THE SAME INGREDIENTS AS IN THE U.S.-PRODUCED PRODUCT BUT DOES NOT CONTAIN BHA.

4. IN THE KOREAN VERNACULAR PRESS OF AUGUST 8, DONG SUH FOOD INDUSTRIES PLACED A NOTICE, TRANSLATED AS FOLLOWS:

"1. "TANG" PRODUCED BY DONG SUH FOOD INDUSTRIES, LTD. DOES NOT CONTAIN BHA (AN ANTISEPTIC), THE USE OF WHICH IS PROHIBITED BY THE KOREAN FOOD SANITATION LAW.

"2. "TANG" PRODUCED IN THE U.S. USED (SIC) BHA, THE USE OF WHICH IS AUTHORIZED ACCORDING TO AMERICAN FOOD APPROVAL STANDARDS.

"3. KOREA'S FOOD SANITATION LAW AUTHORIZES THE USE OF BHA ONLY FOR OILS, FATS, BUTTER, DRIED FISH, SHELLFISH, SALTED PRODUCTS, ETC."

(THE KOREA TIMES REPORTS THAT MHSA LIMITS BHA TO 0.2 GRAMS PER KILOGRAM OF THESE ITEMS.) ND FYI.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE CONTACT FDA AND DETERMINE STATUS OF BHA USE IN "TANG." EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION ON REGULATIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE REGARDING ALLOWABLE CONCENTRATIONS OF THE PRESERVATIVE IN BEVERAGE BASE. GLEYSTEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOOD ADDITIVES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SEOUL06965
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780324-0124
Format: TEL
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780887/aaaacuwpl.tcl
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4c1b0467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 SEOUL 6787
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1803576
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INQUIRY REGARDING ADDITIVE IN TANG
TAGS: BGEN, ECSM, KS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4c1b0467-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014